



Photos by Airman 1st Class Vanessa LaBoy

Airman 1st Class Kevin Lenna uses a ESAB plasma cutter to cut through mild steel he is dematerializing because it is no longer usable. The plasma cutter compresses superheated air with a tight electric arc providing the heat to cut through metal.



Airman 1st Class Kevin Lenna performs a de-milling operation on a piece of unusable metal.

## Element burns and shapes metal into vital parts for Team Holloman

by Airman 1st Class Vanessa LaBoy  
49th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Sparks ricocheting off metal like fireflies and harmful ultra violet rays from torches are not just hazards in the metals technology shop, they are a necessity to safeguard the F-117A Nighthawk from any severe nicks, gauges, dents or dings that could affect the flying mission.

The 49th Maintenance Squadron metals technology element is a vital part of Holloman's mission because they manufacture critical and one of a kind parts and inspect damaged systems to ensure the F-117A Nighthawks meet all mission requirements.

The metal technology shop's main duties include any maintenance or repair that has to do with the F-117A and all of the support equipment from AGE, munitions to transportation that allows for an

overall complete mission.

"If there are any kinds of maintenance problems with the aircraft our shop is called in to evaluate the problem and decide if it needs to be repaired or replaced," said Tech. Sgt. John Hurt, 49th Maintenance Squadron metals technology NCO in charge.

"We do a lot of welding jobs for different squadrons as well as prototype work for the F-117As," Hurt said. "90 percent of what we do has to do with the F-117A. Basically, engineering will send us a drawing or blueprint for an improved process or upgraded part. We look over the blueprint, build it and see if their idea works."

To ensure the stealth program runs smooth and is operational to fly the shop has a variety of tools to per-

form different projects.

"We have everything from lathes and mills to computer Numeric Controlled machinery to get the job done to perfection, Precision measuring tools that are accurate up to .0005 of an inch and the newest welding equipment on the market.

With all this potentially hazardous equipment the seven man team has to put safety first. In the metals shop, teamwork is not only used to get the job done, but for safety reasons as well.

"Everything we do in this shop is a two man effort," Hurt said. "You have to trust the person you're working with, trust that they know their job and what to do in case of an accident. We spend a majority of time moving around large amount of metal, so another hand is always needed."

Before a person can weld

any of the numerous aircraft parts for the F-117A they must go through six months of training in Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Md.

"As a metal technology apprentice I received training from beginning to end of all processes in our element" said Airman 1st Class Kevin Lenna. "I really enjoyed my time in technical school, but the more I work on the job the more I enjoy it everyday"

Every job performed in the metal technology shop is critical, from their inspections for damage in F-117A hydraulic lines to a prototype such as on engine manifold wrench.

"We are an important element to Holloman because of the critical work we do for the Stealth and it's mission" said Tech. Sgt. Steven Harper, 49th Maintenance Squadron metals technology superintendent.



Tech. Sgt. John Hurt hand manipulates a piece of aluminum with a standard gap lathe.



Above: Staff Sgt. George Cutting uses a vertical milling machine on aluminum to manufacture shaft protection guards.



Left: A vertical milling machine is shaves aluminum with a two inch facing cutter.